

Study Approach: Scenarios, Working Assumptions, and Locations

This study explores locations for visitor facilities along a 90-mile corridor that begins at the George Parks Highway just north of Healy and ends in the Kantishna/Wonder Lake area.

Scenarios

Ideas for a new north access route have included both a road and a railroad; therefore, the visitor facilities study explores locations along the Stampede Road alignment for both a road scenario and a railroad scenario. A third scenario explores locations, or ideas, for visitor facilities that could enhance the existing situation and recreational activities that presently occur within the study area, whether or not a north access road or railroad is developed. Since this is a study, as opposed to an environmental impact statement with a proposed action and a range of alternatives, it is not necessary or required to include a “no action alternative.”

For each scenario, the Stampede Road alignment (as defined on page 1) serves as the common reference point from which locations for visitor facilities are explored. The Stampede Road alignment is identified as the reference point because the Congressional language specifically states “Stampede Road alignment” and, in the absence of a site-specific route proposal, exploring locations away from the Stampede Road alignment would be haphazard at best. The locations identified in this study, however, could serve as potential destinations along a transportation corridor even if the majority of a road or railroad route did not follow the Stampede Road alignment.

Working Assumptions

Having outlined the scenarios and defined the Stampede Road alignment as the reference point for the study, some working assumptions became necessary. Recognizing that two of the three scenarios are based on “what if” situations, the study needed assumptions to establish some parameters within each scenario. As much as practical, the working assumptions of this study are consistent with NPS and DNR regulations, agency policies, and approved management plans. The working assumptions are outlined within the scenario discussions.

Locations Explored and Discussed throughout the Visitor Facilities Study

Congress directed the National Park Service to conduct a cooperative study with the State of Alaska to “explore options for locations for campgrounds, trails, and other visitor facilities along the Stampede Road alignment.” The locations identified and discussed in this study incorporate ideas submitted by members of the public during the comment period.

Refer to the map on page 12 for an overview of the locations identified along the 90-mile corridor. These locations, or “nodes of development,” encompass a general area as opposed to a specific geographical site defined by acreage and definitive boundaries. Visitor facilities within these nodes of development could serve travelers along a road or railroad transportation corridor. A comprehensive environmental analysis would be required for access to and development at any of these locations

Each location has some natural and/or cultural feature(s) that could be highlighted through interpretation or facility design. For example, the location that encompasses the Stampede Mine would logically

highlight the history of mining and the unique qualities and contributions of the Stampede Mine. Although a proposal for a north access road or railroad would likely follow a route other than the Stampede Road alignment, the Stampede Mine area and other locations identified in the study could serve as potential destinations along either a road or railroad transportation corridor, even if the majority of the route did not follow the Stampede Road alignment.

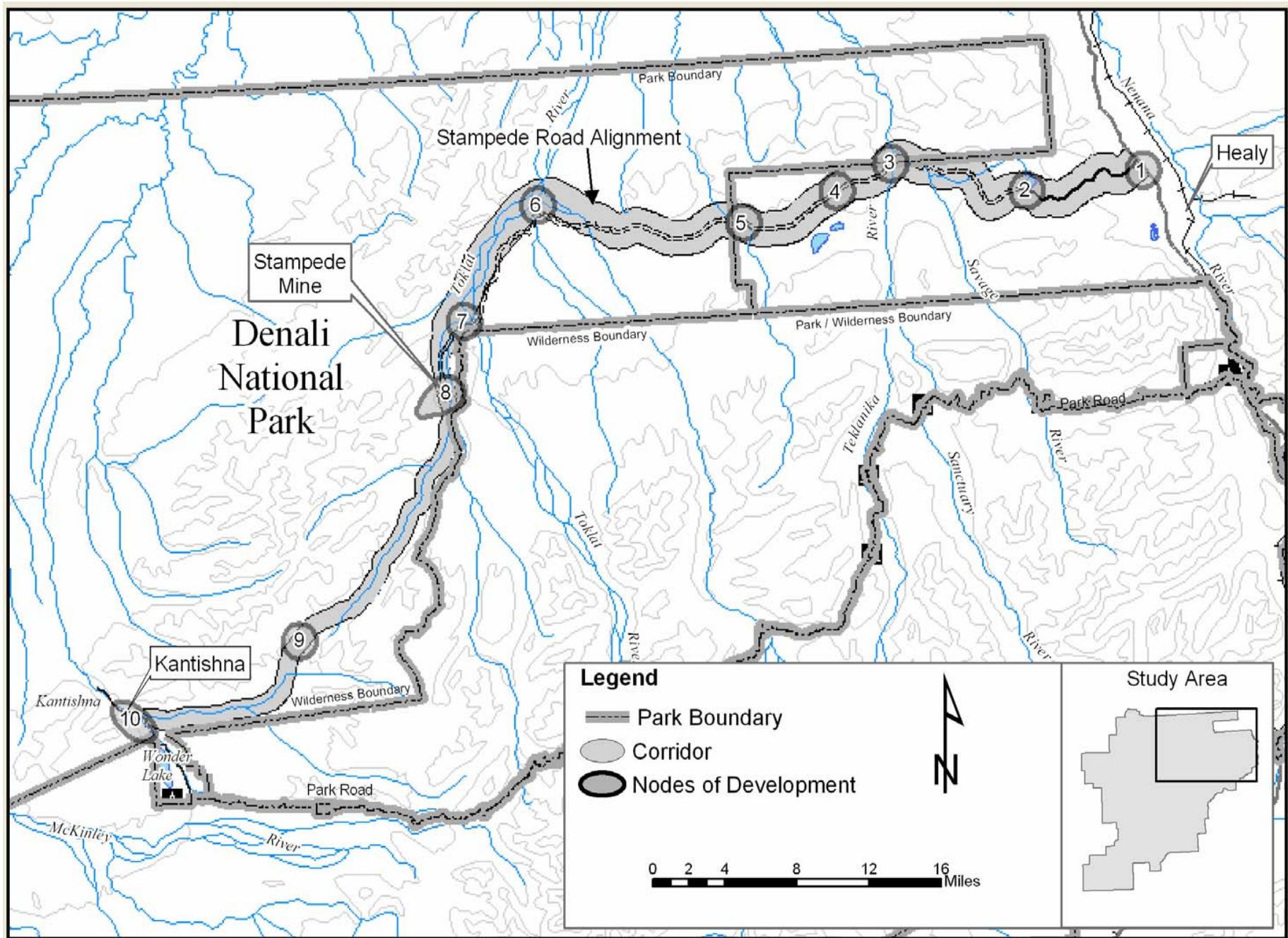
The locations discussed throughout the study are listed in the table below. Not all locations, however, apply to each scenario. The types of visitor facilities associated with each location are dependent on the type and extent of transportation access. Facility considerations, such as costs and design factors, are outlined in appendix C. See appendix D for a discussion of the criteria considered in selecting these locations.

Table – Locations for Visitor Facilities Study

LOCATION #	LOCATION NAME	MILEPOST (approximate)
1	George Parks Highway	0
2	Eight Mile Lake	8
3	Savage/Teklanika Rivers	18
4	Teklanika-Sushana Divide	21
5	Sushana River	28
6	Toklat-East Fork	42
7	Toklat-Clearwater Fork	51
8	Stampede Mine	56
9	Myrtle-Willow Divide	75
10	Kantishna/Wonder Lake	90

The map on the following page provides an overview of the locations along the Stampede Road alignment. A brief description and topographical map of each location are found on pages 13-22. The scenario discussions begin on page 23 and provide greater detail about the types of visitor facilities considered at each location.

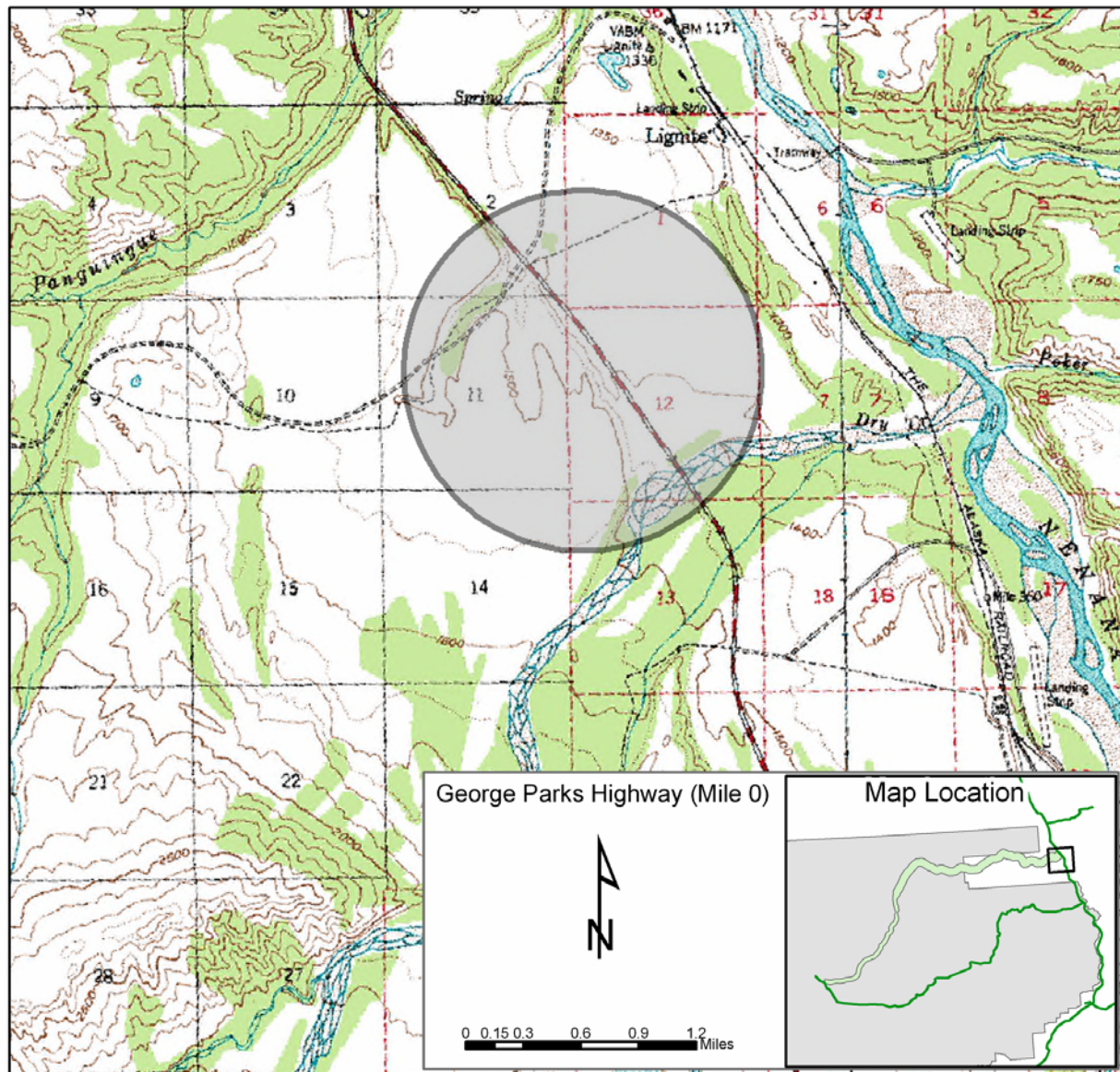
Refer to appendix E for an overview of the natural and human conditions found within the study area.



Map – Locations along the Stampede Road alignment

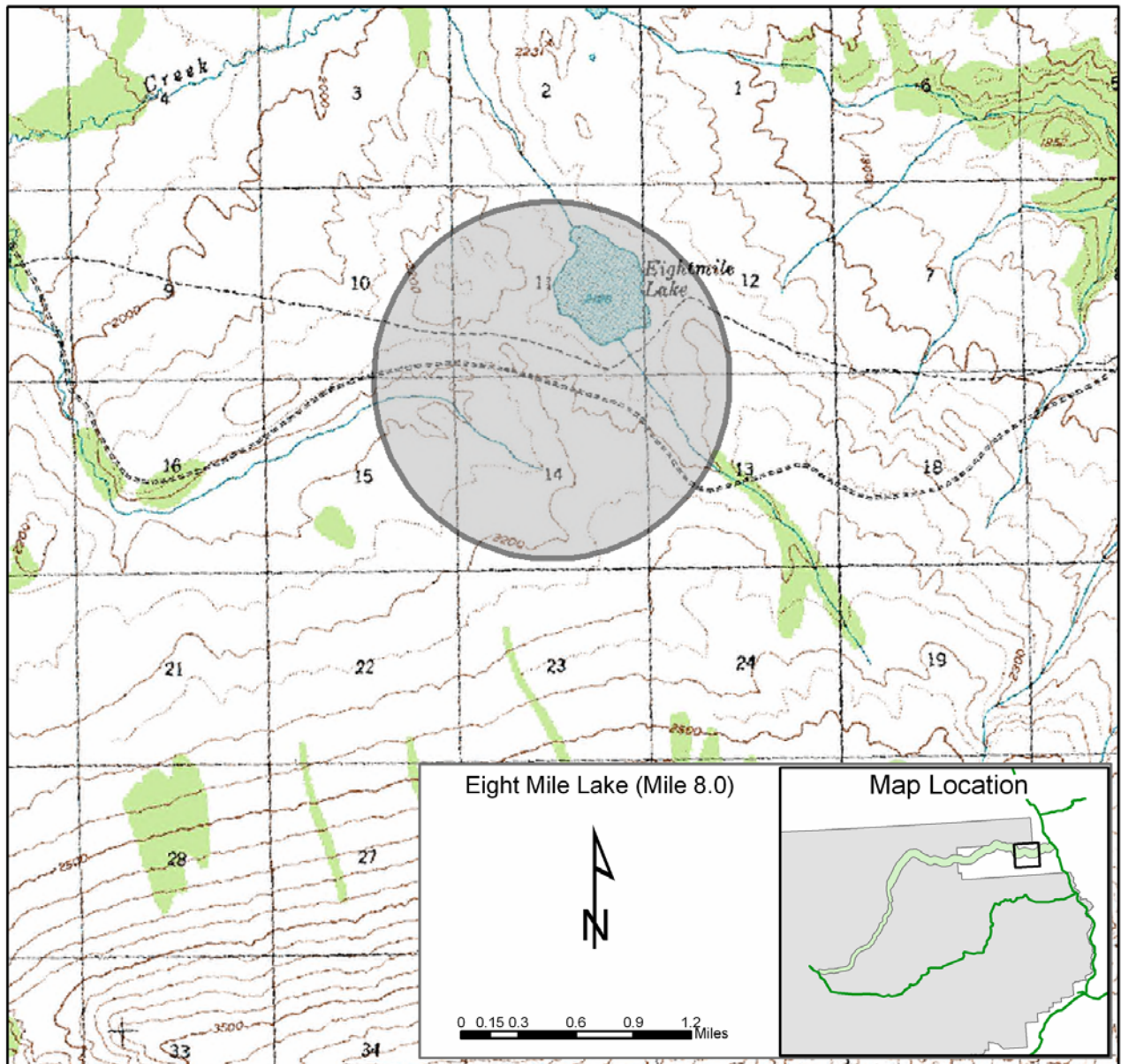
Location 1 – George Parks Highway (Mile 0)

Location 1 refers to a general area located along the George Parks Highway near the intersection of the highway and Stampede Road, possibly north of Dry Creek and south of the Stampede Road. A facility along the George Parks Highway would provide convenient access for both northbound and southbound traffic. This location has been identified as a potential visitor contact facility/information center for both the road and railroad scenario. This location could feature interpretation of the nearby archeological site along Dry Creek and become a destination for visitors interested in the region's cultural history. The facility for the railroad scenario would require a larger "footprint" on the land than would a visitor/welcome center for the road scenario because land would be needed to park trains overnight and for loading and unloading passengers. Also, the railroad scenario would require a larger parking area because visitors boarding a train would need to park their vehicles for a longer time period than visitors stopping by a visitor/welcome center for information and then leaving in their vehicles to drive a 90-mile road.



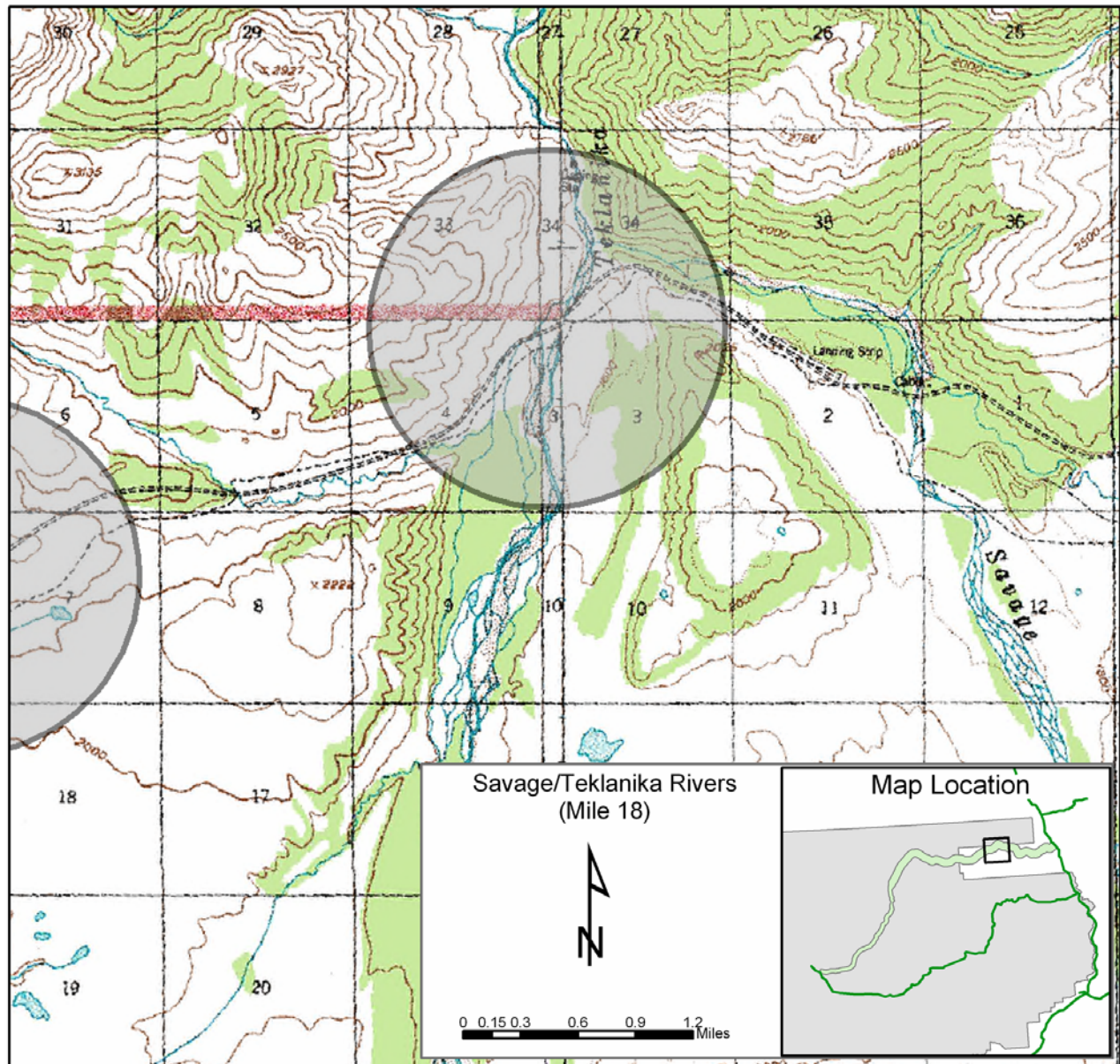
Location 2 – Eight Mile Lake (Mile 8.0)

Eight Mile Lake marks the end of the maintained portion of the Stampede Road and currently serves as an undeveloped parking area/trailhead and dispersed camping location. This area is identified under all three scenarios. Visitor facilities could include camping facilities, improved parking, restroom facilities, and lake access. Communication and coordination with landowners would be necessary for any development.



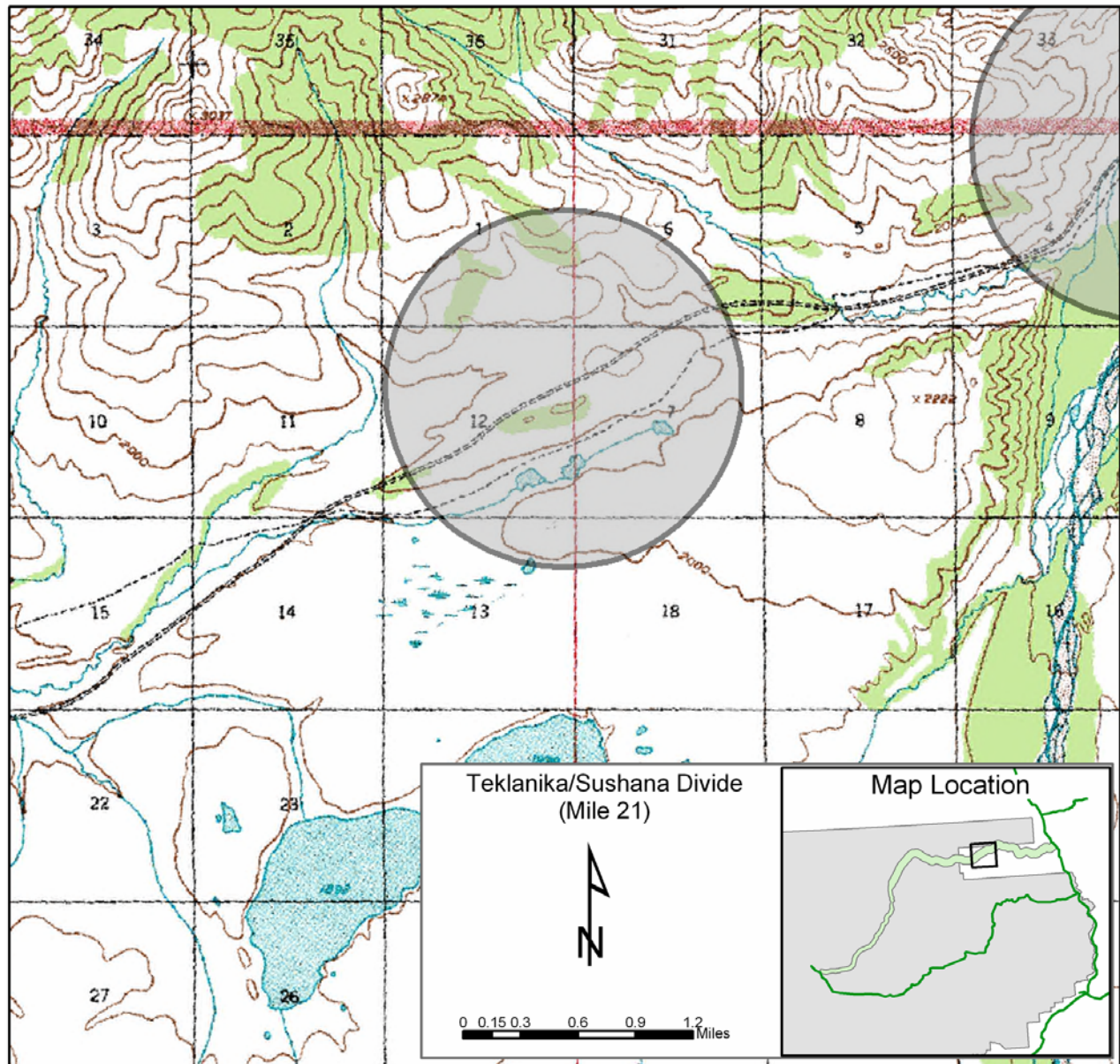
Location 3 – Savage/Teklanika Rivers (Mile 18)

The Savage and Teklanika Rivers were identified by the public as possible locations for visitor facilities. Some of the comments pertaining to this area, which encompasses the confluence of the Savage and Teklanika Rivers, included the following facilities: a parking area, a picnic area, restrooms, an interpretive loop trail to a historic cabin site, a trailhead for a destination/connector trail with the existing Savage River Trail within the national park, a campground, and designated dispersed campsites. This location includes both state and national park lands.



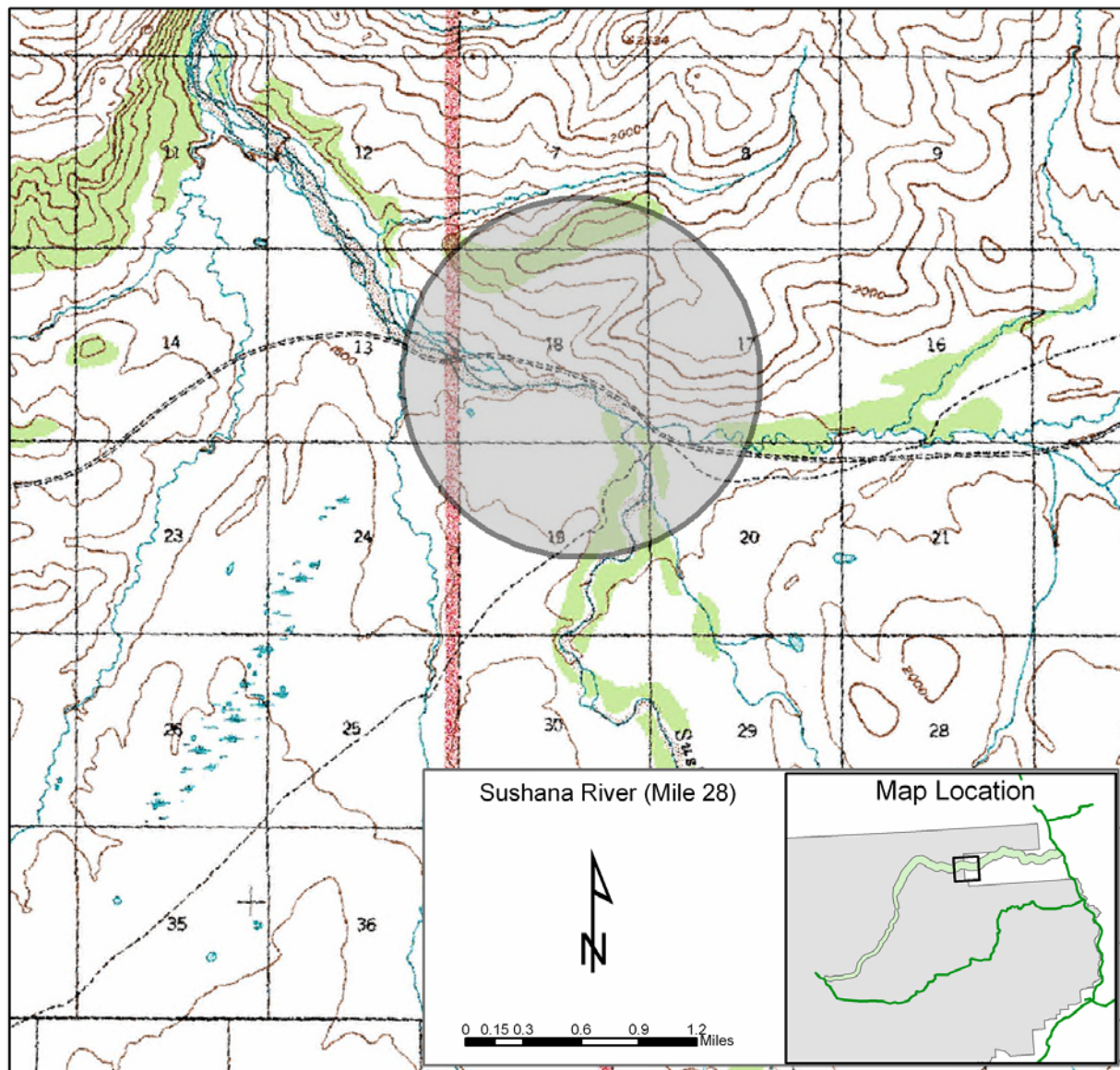
Location 4 – Teklanika-Sushana Divide (Mile 21)

After crossing the Teklanika River, the road alignment rises to an elevation of 2000 feet and an expansive view of the landscape provides the visitors with a distant view of Mount McKinley, approximately 80 miles to the southwest. Visitor facilities at this location could highlight the scenic vista and interpret the surrounding landscape.



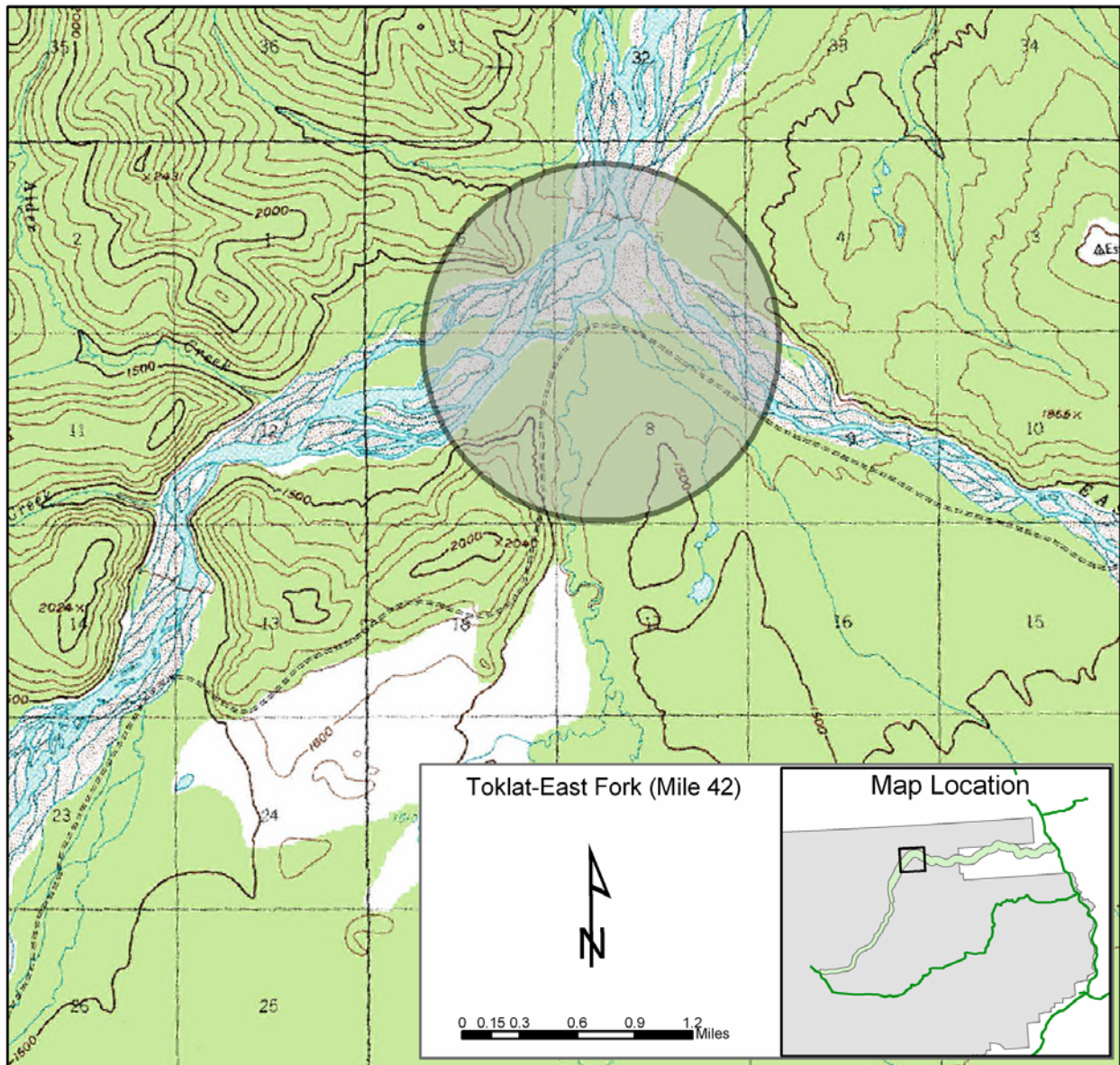
Location 5 – Sushana River (Mile 28)

The Sushana River location would be the farthest west location for facility development on state land. This area offers opportunities to explore the Sushana River and two remote lakes. This location includes the former Fairbanks City bus mentioned in Jon Krakauer's 1996 book, *Into the Wild*, that told of Chris McCandless' fateful trip to Alaska. While opinions about the bus's future vary, the bus has nonetheless become a noted landmark and destination attraction for many people. The Stampede Road alignment enters national park land at the west end of this location.



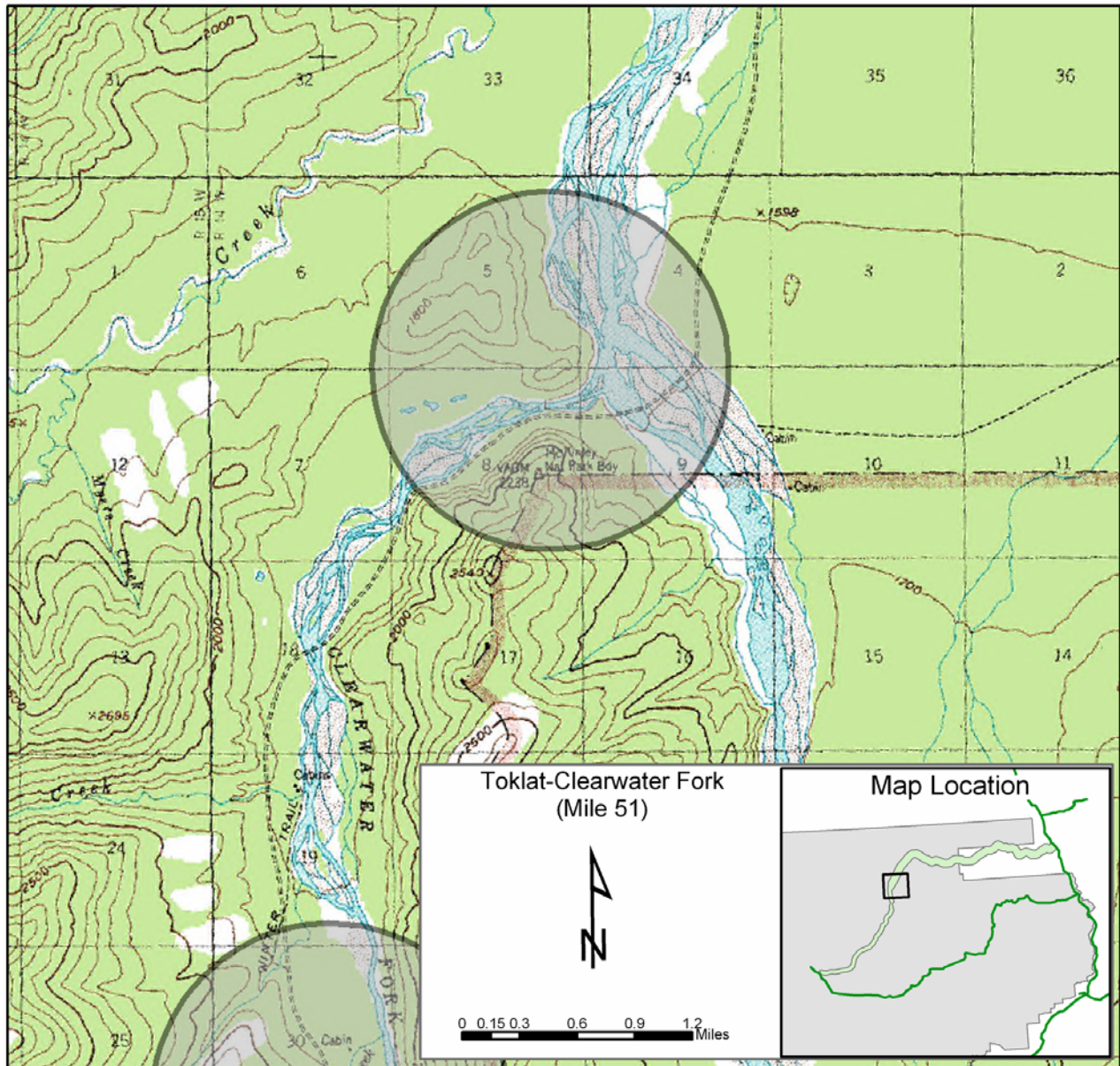
Location 6 – Toklat-East Fork (Mile 42)

The confluence of the Toklat and East Fork Rivers would offer visitors an opportunity to explore and hike along the rivers. Visitor facilities along a road corridor could include a wayside with restroom facilities, interpretive signs and a hiking trail.



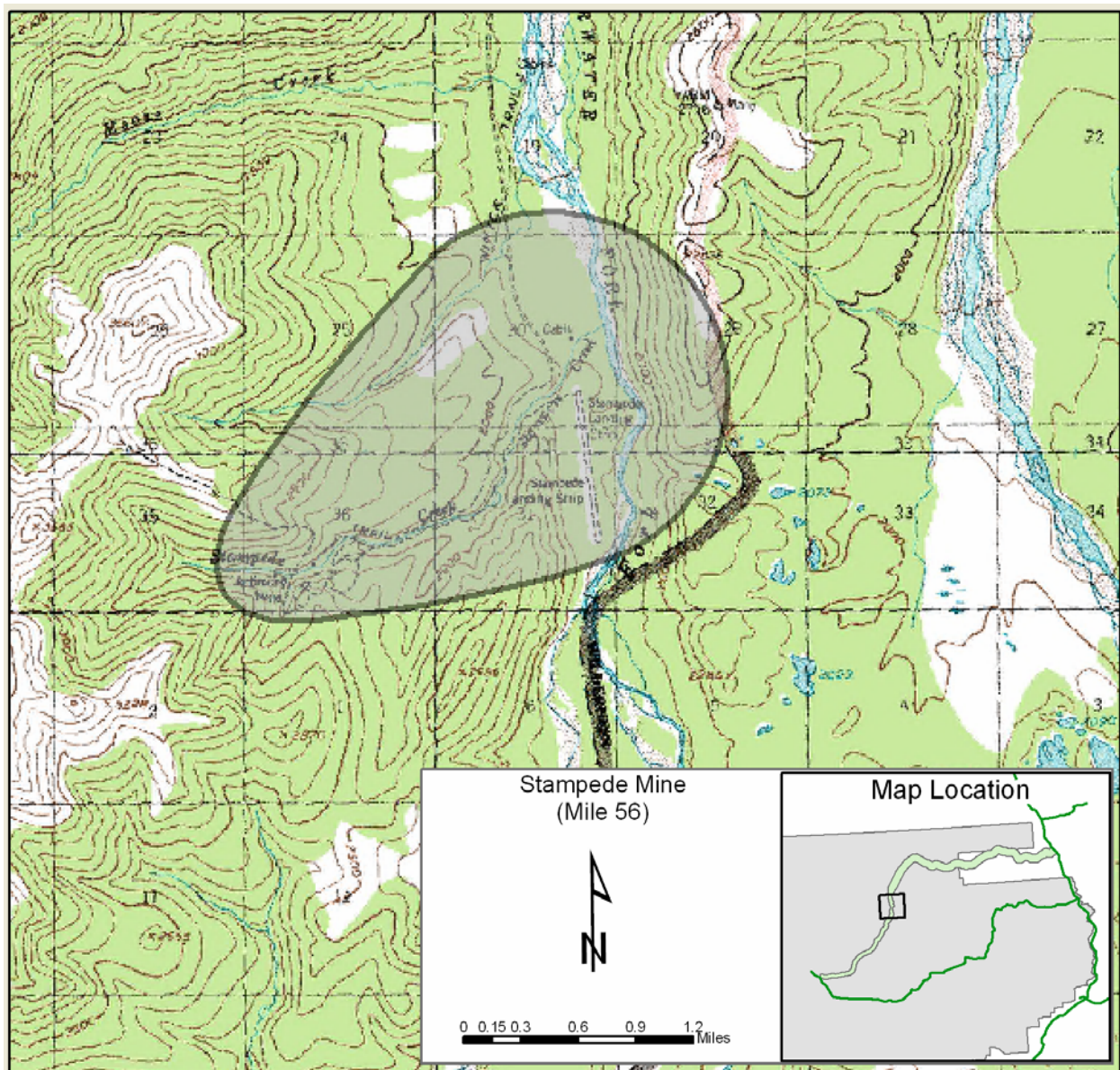
Location 7 – Toklat-Clearwater Fork (Mile 51)

Visitor facilities at a river crossing near the Toklat and Clearwater Fork Rivers could provide another rest stop and viewing area for visitors traveling along a road corridor.



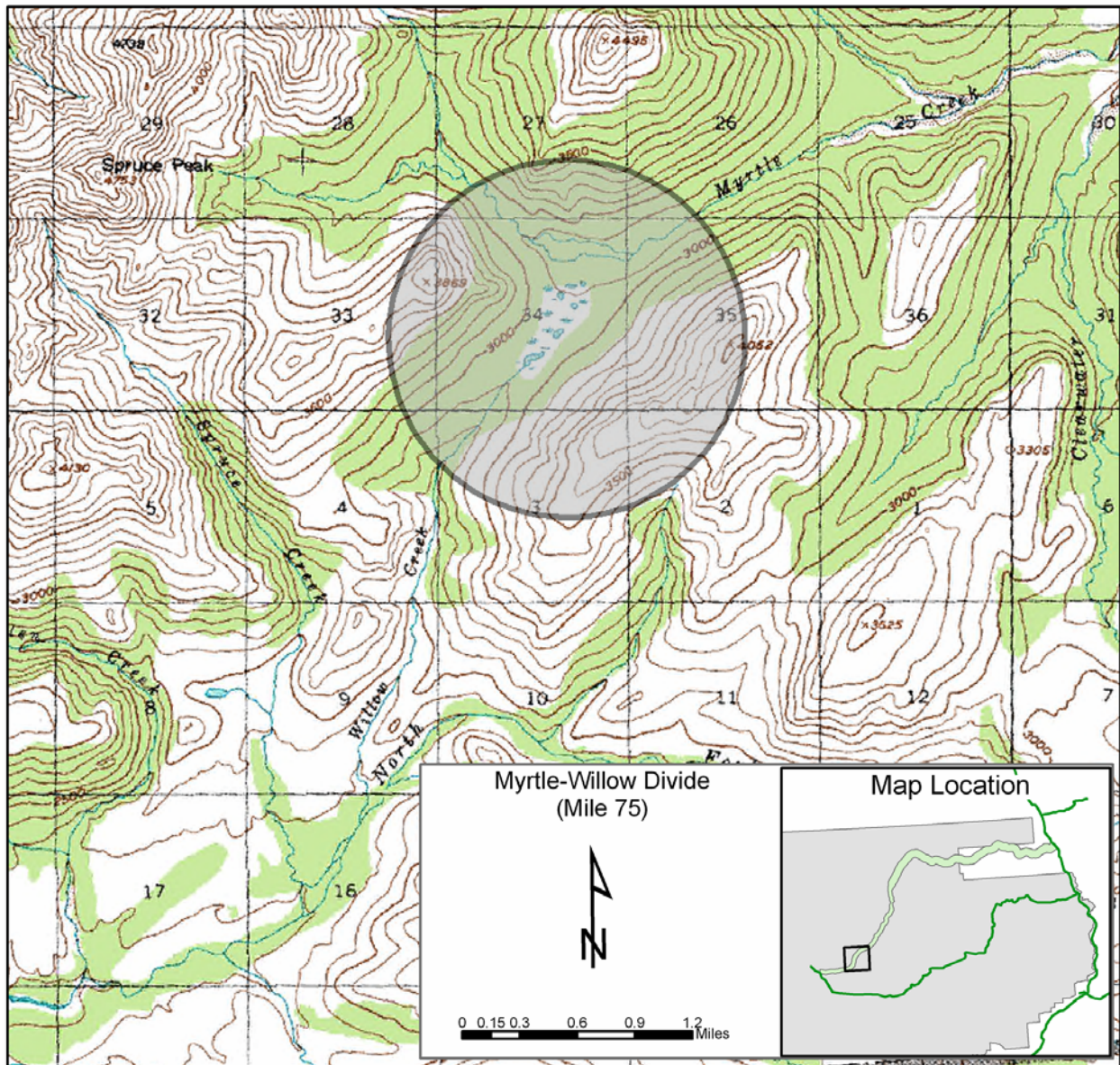
Location 8 – Stampede Mine (Mile 56)

The historic Stampede Mine offers various interpretive opportunities. Visitor facilities could highlight the history of mining and the unique qualities and contributions of the Stampede Mine to the region's history. Communication and coordination with the two private inholders would be necessary for any development.



Location 9 – Myrtle-Willow Divide (Mile 75)

A spectacular view of Mount McKinley occurs at the Myrtle-Willow Divide. This viewpoint suggests a prime location for a stop along a road or railroad to allow travelers an opportunity to enjoy the view and take photos.



Location 10 – Kantishna/Wonder Lake (Mile 90)

The Kantishna/Wonder Lake area would be the terminus for a new road and a railroad. Kantishna is comprised of numerous historic mine sites and interesting natural features, such as the Quigley Cabin, Little Annie Mine and Wickersham Dome. Lodging and flightseeing services are offered during the summer season. The existing facilities at Wonder Lake consist of a Ranger Station that serves as a small information center, a 28-site campground for tent campers only (no private vehicle access) and a trail system. Expansion of the existing facilities/services and some new development would likely be needed to meet the needs of the increased number of visitors traveling to the Kantishna/Wonder Lake area via a new road or railroad.

